

# OFFICERS CAREER NOTES



## CHOOSING A FUNCTIONAL AREA

An officer's functional area (FA) is vital to his professional development. It is therefore important for him to choose the right area, seek schooling and experience in it, and make it a path to promotion and higher levels of responsibility.

The following are some rules of thumb that will help you pick your functional area:

- First, read DA Pamphlet 600-3.
- Some FAs (41, 50, 51, 54, 39, 46) require less formal schooling, fewer gates, and more flexible timeline management.
- Others (45, 48, 49, 52, 53) require more schooling. Once you are branch qualified, you will need to move quickly into your functional area development. With these functional areas, you will be less likely to find time for a second company command tour or an observer-controller job.
- Choose an area you like and think you will be able to do well.
- If you don't like the functional area you initially select, ask to change it. A simple DA Form 4187 to PERSCOM will initiate the process. If the request is denied, keep trying.
- Get recommendations from senior officers in your chain of command or from other mentors. Since they know you and the system, they can help make the best match.

Keep in mind that when you select a functional area, you may also be sowing the seeds for a productive second career after you leave the Army.

## COMBINED ARMS AND SERVICES STAFF SCHOOL

Infantry officers are falling behind in attending the Combined Arms and Services Staff School (CAS<sup>3</sup>). Specifically, Infantry officers in Year Groups 1981 to 1986 show below-average CAS<sup>3</sup> qualification rates compared to officers of other branches.

The individual officer is primarily responsible for remedying this problem. Any captain who has not attended CAS<sup>3</sup> should do his best to get into a class. He should plan a time to attend on the basis of his unit's long-term training plans. Then he should finish Phase I of the course as soon as possible and ask his commander for a slot to attend the course.

A unit may find it difficult to have a captain away for three months, but this difficulty will be more than offset by the long-term development of the officer and the unit. The CAS<sup>3</sup> learning payoff in the officer's improved writing, speaking, and thinking skills. The sooner he gains this experience, the sooner he can apply it to accomplishing the unit's mission.

Early attendance at CAS<sup>3</sup> is good for an officer's individual professional development and good for the unit and for the Infantry in the long run.

## IOBC PLATOON TRAINERS

About 15 officers annually are hand-picked from graduating Infantry Officer Advanced Course (IOAC) classes to train, coach, mentor, and lead new infantry lieutenants in the Infantry Officer Basic Course (IOBC). The commandant of the Infantry School views these platoon trainer assignments as top priority for IOAC graduates, and only the very best officers are selected.

To qualify, an officer must have had an above-average manner of performance as a lieutenant; must be recommended by his former chain of command; and must demonstrate the character and fitness to serve as a role model for second lieutenants.

Upon completion of a two-year tour, a platoon trainer is given assignment preference (subject to Army requirements) as he goes to a branch-qualifying company command assignment.

Any officer who is interested in this program should contact Infantry Branch at the Total Army Personnel Command (PERSCOM) or write to Commander, 2d Battalion, 11th Infantry Regiment, Fort Benning, GA 31905.

